

NOTES
ON
RELIGION

BY
JOHN JAY CHAPMAN

BR
121
C45
1916

on

Library of The Theological Seminary

PRINCETON · NEW JERSEY

••

FROM THE LIBRARY OF
ROBERT ELLIOTT SPEER

••
BK
121
C45

1915

NOTES ON RELIGION

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

HOMERIC SCENES: Hector's Farewell and The Wrath of Achilles.

16mo. :: :: 60 cents



NOTES ON RELIGION

BY
JOHN JAY CHAPMAN



NEW YORK
LAURENCE J. GOMME
1915

COPYRIGHT, 1915, BY
LAURENCE J. GOMME

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE ROMAN CHURCH	I
II. THE EFFECT OF HEBRAIC THOUGHT ON WESTERN EUROPE	49
III. THE INDESTRUCTIBILITY OF RELIGION	60
IV. MEMORIES AND HALF-THOUGHTS	62
I. Do Not Go in Search of Religion	63
II. Teaching a Child	65
III. Institutions	66
IV. Many Mansions	68
V. The Words of Christ	69
VI. Modern Science and Christian Sci- ence	70
VII. The Message of Christianity	72
VIII. The Mystical Body of Christ	73
IX. The Salvation. Tolstoi. Nietzsche	75
X. Theology	83
XI. The Love of God	84
XII. Moods	84
XIII. Horace	85
XIV. Apparent Hiatus	85
XV. East or West	86
XVI. The Porches to the Temple of Truth	87
XVII. Sacrifice and Burnt Offerings	89

NOTES ON RELIGION

I

THE ROMAN CHURCH

I STOOD in a fertile mead full of flowers; and I looked across and saw an old city with its walls and battlements,—what was left of them,—an old mediæval city. And the ramparts of the city were broken, and through them I saw the gigantic wreck of a great church. And the great central church was surrounded by lesser domes and naves which seemed its offshoots. There were many of them, and the plan of the one warred with the plan of the next; and many were in ruins, and the great church itself was damaged but services were still going on in it and in them. The great church was the Roman Catholic Church and the lesser buildings were its offspring, the Protestant Churches of Europe.

And thus standing in the meadow and looking across four centuries, I viewed the Roman church and I knew that all those intermediate walls and structures which had risen and been demolished, risen again and again been de-

NOTES ON RELIGION

molished during the four centuries that lay between my own time and the last fall of the Roman Empire, had been necessary in order to give foreground, necessary to make any survey possible of a thing so vast, so familiar, so universal, so intimately a part of myself as the Roman Catholic Church. We cannot see great things while we stand near to them. Time must broaden the moat according to the size of the castle. And this cathedral which housed western Europe for a thousand years must be viewed from a distance; nay, it must be seen in a perspective that shall take in a still remoter past. In order to make any guess at the place which such an institution holds in our own epoch, we must look backward,—very far backward,—back to Christ, back to Abraham and the Mosaic Dispensation.

In all this matter we are dealing with the influence of Christ. His power shines not only forward down through the centuries, appearing in history as Christianity, but it also casts light backward upon that Jewish history and religion out of which he stepped. Christ himself is bigger than Christianity, and makes us forget it, when we see him. He does the same for Jewish History. He is the point at which the two met. If occasionally I shall speak of the Old and New Testaments as of

NOTES ON RELIGION

a single Dispensation, I do so for convenience, and also to accentuate what they have in common. No doubt if Christ had never lived, the Old Testament would never have been heard of except by scholars. It might perhaps have exercised a literary influence upon Europe; but its deeper imports would not have been discerned. Yet now that we have read all those old sacred books as the background of Christ, they are seen to be a part of him. More than this, it was with this light upon them that they reached Europe; so that we may say that, so far as Europe is concerned, his light has shined through them always. The Old and New Testaments may then, for certain purposes, be viewed as a single influence.

The chief miracle with regard to the older Hebrew literature is that the books should have come down to us in such genuine condition. What a race of angels the old Jews must have been, to preserve these volumes in their purity, and to keep them open to the public as they seem always to have done. There in the temple lay the great writings from generation to generation of Jewish History, and every scholar had access to them; and every man on the streets of Jerusalem could discuss them. About them, to be sure, grew up various schools of interpretation. But

NOTES ON RELIGION

no one endeavoured to make these sacred books into instruments of political oppression. Or if anyone did so the tremendous intellectual power of the individual Hebrew soon defeated the attempt. The Jews were a race of mental athletes, as every page of the Old Testament proves. Had there been successful tyranny, it would have come about through the growing up of a secret priesthood and the withholding of the Scriptures from the people.

It is a strange fact that as soon as these Scriptures became known to western Europe, as soon as the power of the Jewish Scriptures became apparent, their serviceability as an instrument of government was seen. So terrible was the power of Jewish thought over the unsophisticated western world, that rulers could not resist the temptation to use this thought for purposes of government. One might say that no European has ever been quite able to resist this temptation. You can to-day hardly find a Sunday-school teacher who will trust the Bible to do its own work: he must preempt it. He builds his little fence about it, and holds the gate himself.

The Bible contains a summary of man's emotional nature, it gives a sort of cue to the riddle of life. The ideas in it are few; but they agree with each other and they are illus-

NOTES ON RELIGION

trated with so much variety, with such living power and such miraculous depth of thought that few minds can withstand its appeal. The Hebraic point of view, the Hebraic conception of life, expressed the spiritual needs of man, his sentiments, his aspirations, his relation to God so much more truly than any other philosophies that the Jewish Scriptures for a time superseded all other learning in Europe. The mystical inner logic, and identity of feeling (which makes all this Hebraic folk-lore operate as a solid unity of power), as well as the extraordinary portability of the Bible (which can be packed in a box), laid western Europe at the mercy of Israel. Nothing extant could resist it. Judaism was destined to replace other religions much as good astronomy replaces bad astronomy, or good physics, bad physics. The popularity of the Hebrew Scriptures made it necessary that they should be adopted as the basis of society. They were at once put into service as an instrument of government,—*the* instrument of government of the Roman Empire.

The abuses of the Roman church have always grown out of the necessities of government; and they can invariably be detached from the Scriptures upon which they are founded and to which they cling like lichens.

NOTES ON RELIGION

I call them "abuses,"—one might more properly call them "uses"; for they were simply devices which were useful, indeed necessary to the church's supremacy. The first of these abuses was the incorporation into the Catholic church of the old Roman religion, the acceptance by the church of the pomp and ritual which formed an historic part of the Roman imagination. This ecclesiastical pomp with its elaborate ceremonies was modeled upon classic tradition. From the point of view of historic continuity the successorship of the Roman Catholic Church to the Roman Empire is the most interesting fact in history. The old Roman ritual, the Roman spirit of obedience, the Roman worship of external display, and the Roman passion for universal domination have been delivered over to the modern world in unbroken continuity. Yet, of course, all of these things have come to occupy towards the modern world a strange and incongruous relation.

From the point of view of Biblical history the incorporation of the old Roman religion into a theocracy based on Israel was a somewhat revolting piece of stage work, through which the mysteries of the soul were transformed into political agencies, and men were brought into a superstitious obedience. When-

NOTES ON RELIGION

ever we feel impelled to condemn the Roman church as the practicer of a degrading form of tyranny, let us remember that she is merely pursuing a course which she entered on in the fourth century. Her officers cannot understand what is wrong with the practice. They know nothing else.

One cannot help wondering how the Hebrew prophet would have viewed this outcome of Israel's influence, how the intellectual person, Isaiah, or John the Baptist, or St. Paul, would have felt towards this outcome of his labors. In spite of the extraordinary grasp of human things which Christ everywhere shows, I cannot find any intimation that he himself foresaw such an outcome as, for instance, the Society of Jesus. I cannot find in the Gospels any fear of political tyranny or much interest in the details of the way in which spiritual laws work out. Christ seems to be trying to get through the day each day, and to deliver his message of the law, perhaps to allow the law to speak for itself. But the followers of Christ had to deal with the cyclones which he had brought on. These forces which Christ somehow released, or which were released through him and through the Jewish Dispensation behind him, must, it was felt, be explained a little, controlled a little, and

NOTES ON RELIGION

guided a little. St. Paul therefore inauguates a sort of metaphysic and a sort of parish discipline, both of them very mild, and on a small scale. The Roman church very soon found that in order to secure obedience she must interpose something between the Scriptures and the believer. How else could she control him? The exciting power of the Scriptural ideas was obvious; but the direction which that excitement might take was very uncertain. For instance, one common result of Jewish influence has always been to arouse contempt for civil authority. It seemed like dealing out firearms to a mob to give such teaching as this to the people at large. The whole instruction must therefore be manacled, the head of power in the stream must be harnessed. Out of this discovery of the need of harness there grew up every single one of the thousandfold dogmas, customs, rituals, exercises, theories of conduct, theories of theology, exposition of texts, manuals of devotion, organizations of the Hierarchy, rules of precedence, spiritual claims, temporal claims;—also all relaxations and indulgences, all exceptions to rules, theories for avoiding the application of rules, alternative practices and inner doctrines;—the whole incredible and complex metaphysic of government which

NOTES ON RELIGION

fifty generations of Roman rulers have evolved out of the changing needs in the practical government of that great machine, the Roman Catholic Church. One key unlocks the rationale of every Roman doctrine and practice.

All of these things are instruments of government and can only be intelligently considered if viewed in this light. These doctrines and practices, however, are not accidental or arbitrary things; they have not been made out of theory. They have each been developed out of a need, evolved from conditions, distilled by the natural heat of humanity and crystallized in the natural pressure of events. Every one of them is an organic product, potent, wonderful, having something of magic in it,—the magic of experience. These instruments of government have come down to our times with the Roman church: they *are* the Roman church.

Let us now consider what are the functions of a government. Those functions are to tax, to regulate justice, to control education, to settle the status of citizens, etc., etc. The matter of taxation is vital. How far any government shall go in taxing or in controlling men is a matter of circumstances. The Roman Curia, through a policy, which as I shall show in a

NOTES ON RELIGION

moment was sound worldly policy, has always claimed absolute and illimitable control. In the gradual loss of the world, which the Curia has been suffering since the thirteenth century, her attitude of absolute claim has not changed. This policy was fixed by her documents and by her practices; it could not be changed. It has persisted from the era when emperors knelt at her feet, down to this day. *The claim* to govern is always the same. It covers Life and Death. It covers every circumstance touching body or soul, whether in this world or in the next. How far that claim can be enforced at any period has always been a matter of circumstance.

I would, however, point out to the Protestant that the Roman church has never been fond of tyranny, and has resorted to strong measures only when compelled to do so by worldly considerations. Heresy has been heavily punished only when circumstances made heresy treason. The Albigenses, for instance, laughed at the Roman officials, and were establishing an independent civilization for themselves. So, also, throughout Catholic history individual persons have often been allowed to hold doctrines which were fundamentally at war with Roman dogma, because the circumstances of the age did not make

NOTES ON RELIGION

the matter into a political issue. For instance, in the times before the Reformation, the Catholic church was full of mystics who must have been condemned if they had existed a century or two later. These mystics were substantially Protestants; they lived in a union with God which required no interposition of the church. Their immunity need not surprise us. We all know that in ordinary political life, some event which excites no attention in one year will raise a riot in the next. So it is with the history of persecution. Persecution is always controlled by the imaginative, political fears of the persecutor. Severe persecutions always represent panic. After a split has once occurred in an organization, straws and feathers become symbols of the controversy. Therefore in the era before the Reformation, there was greater practical freedom, greater scope for personal feeling in religion than has since been permissible in the Roman Church; and anyone who wishes to acquire a right feeling about the Roman religion ought to grow familiar with the Catholicism which prevailed when all the world was Catholic. Here are the sources from which many good Catholics draw their inspiration, and their piety differs in little but name from much of Protestant piety. So long as it

NOTES ON RELIGION

is satisfied with the practical loyalty of its members that church does not tease them, and has never teased them about doctrines. Doctrines and dogmas are put forth only as a means of quelling insurgency. After the organization has experienced some unpleasant internal dissension the philosophic result is condensed into a dogma so as to padlock the future. Thus the first creed was adopted by the Apostles as a test of loyalty: they had been through a dangerous disagreement or they never would have started a creed. So, also, the Nicene Creed was adopted in order to control the organization. So in recent times the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and of the Papal Infallibility were promulgated in order to stifle certain liberals who had been giving trouble inside of the organization. A dogma always shows that there has been a tempest.

Of course after there has been such an unpleasantness, the embers which it leaves behind it are hot and treacherous: certain words and names have come to carry implications of horror. So, for instance, the term *quietism* to-day implies the most dreadful heresy in Catholic circles because it very picturesquely and briefly describes a kind of piety which was practised with impunity in the fourteenth

NOTES ON RELIGION

century but which led in the seventeenth to serious persecutions. In regard to Quietism, a point of extraordinary interest was illustrated in the history of this heresy,—namely the point that the church itself cannot tell whether a doctrine is heretical or not, until time proves whether or not the doctrine leads to the weakening of the church's political power.

The Spiritual Guide of Molinos was published in 1675. It contained two ideas, each of which Molinos believed in with an absolute faith, and which were nevertheless in the last analysis destructive of one another. The first idea was the idea of the direct union of the soul with God,—a union so close as to make a priesthood unnecessary,—the second was the idea of the authority of the church. The enormous popularity of the first idea, and the spread of a sect founded upon it seemed to threaten the power of the church. But the *Inquisition*, which made a formal inquest upon Molinos' teachings in 1682, found the second idea (the supremacy of the church), so faithfully and sincerely upheld by Molinos that his Spiritual Guide was approved. As time went on, however, it was discovered that the *practical effect* of Molinos' influence was to weaken the Papacy and to create a new quasi-Protes-

NOTES ON RELIGION

tant sect. Molinos was accordingly, in 1685, imprisoned. His subsequent trial, persecution, death, and defamation form one of the worst pages in Church history.

It may be well to note here an idea which is inconceivable to the Protestant imagination, and obvious to the Catholic imagination and which floats down the ages with the whole Roman controversy. Its last appearance may be noted in the pamphlets of the Modernists who are continuing to illustrate it to Europe. The idea is that a thing can both be and not be. The good Catholic believes his soul to be in direct union with God. And yet the church is between them. The two ideas of Molinos' contradict one another.

Molinos submitted: he was led into the presence of the brilliant assembly which had been convened to witness his humiliation, attired in a penitential garb and holding a burning torch between his bound hands. Molinos was thus true to his second idea,—the absolute supremacy of the church. "Good-bye, Father," he said to the Dominican who was leading him off to imprisonment for life, "we shall meet again on the Judgment Day, and then it will be seen if the truth was on your side or on mine." Let it be noted that the ceremonial submission of Molinos was not

NOTES ON RELIGION

like the submission of Socrates, or the submission of Christ, or the submission of Galileo—all of whom retained the right of private judgment and submitted only to the punishment or to the ceremony. Molinos submits to the reason of the punishment: he recants. And yet he appeals. The intellect which is able to recant after this manner,—which is able to conceive of a thing as being both true and not true at the same time, has received an injury in early life from which it has never recovered. This is the injury which the Roman church inflicts upon the brains of her adherents. Unless this injury be inflicted, the man is not a true Catholic; he is not sure to remain a Catholic. If it be cured, he cannot remain a Catholic in the papal sense of the word. So subtly do men vary in their religious experiences that some Catholics who feel very clearly their personal union with God, do upon excommunication, smile at the church; others grieve, others go forward and back, now proclaiming allegiance and again becoming aware of their independence.

All of these individual spiritual experiences are part of the history of Christianity. As they become massed into political forces, or become visible as popular movements, history deals with them and history is obliged to use

NOTES ON RELIGION

every shift and engine of philosophic thought in order to deal with its cloudy material. Behind the clouds, however, are the men and women of the past. In considering the disruption of the old Roman hierarchy, we are obliged at one moment to have in mind the worldly frame of government, and at the next, the spiritual conditions of men.

The new states and nations which were growing up out of the Roman Empire found that there was no room for national feeling within the old Roman system. They had to fight their way out of it. The new nationalities became a species of competing religions, intricately bound up with doctrinal questions and with practical politics. If heresy was a kind of treason to the church,—so also the payment of Peter's pence to the church became a kind of heresy to the new national feeling. I confess that I have been following the fashion of contemporary historians in putting forward the secular aspect of the matter. This aspect is always the most visible of the two; because patriotism and national politics are things which the modern mind easily imagines; whereas the attachments of religious feeling are but faintly understood by us to-day. The struggle, however, always bears two interpretations. It

NOTES ON RELIGION

can be thought of as a struggle for temporal power going on among the rulers; and again, as an inward, religious, and ethical struggle going on within the hearts of individuals. One must be on one's guard against those modern historians who write a history of religion and leave religion out.

The form in which religious disturbance arose was somewhat as follows:—Certain pious citizens were perhaps living in a German, French, or English mediæval city, paying their money regularly to Rome and obeying her humbly. Among these men, however, there arose new curiosities, new sciences, new learning, new individual piety, and all of these things weakened the allegiance of the citizens to Rome, and played into the hands of the new national governments which were just arising based upon geography, law, and language.

No doubt the beginnings of anti-Roman influence could be traced straight back to antiquity. It was, however, not till the time of the Reformation that the new forces prevailed. The old Roman Empire fell and modern Europe was born. The great Cathedral of Mediaeval Civilization could not be entirely demolished all at once; but the outer walls were taken and the first series of never end-

NOTES ON RELIGION

ing demolitions and reconstructions of the ramparts was begun. Ever since that time both sides have been working like ants over the pile,—the demolishers striving to complete their work of destruction, the defenders, to save as much as possible of the sacred edifice.

The important thing to understand is that the whole controversy in all its forms, and through all the ages, hinges upon the same idea, the same conflict of claim in the breast of the individual. For instance:—You have a Roman Catholic friend. How far will he obey the church? That depends. If he is a converted pagan of the fourth century, he will be almost sure to obey it; but not altogether so. If too much be required of him, he will resist. If your friend is a modern person, a teacher, for example in the public school of to-day and a good Catholic, he will tend to obey his church; but not altogether so. He would not perhaps favor putting Roman Catholic flags on an American town hall. He would very likely not concede the extreme claims of the church to control all the education in the world. He will act according to circumstances. If his private interests and his personal feelings are greatly outraged by some claims which the church makes upon

NOTES ON RELIGION

him, he will throw over the church altogether as was done by so many people during the Reformation.

The practical problem of the Roman church is forever the same, i. e. that of getting men to give money, and to give obedience. Yet the problem is ever varying,—How much money? How much obedience? Now, as the outward and practical problem remains the same throughout the ages, so does the inward and spiritual problem upon which all hinges, remain always the same. The religious consciousness, the personal relation of a man to God, that is the first idea. The authority of the church, her right to intervene between the individual soul and God,—that is the second idea. It was, therefore, by no accident but out of inevitable necessity that the case of Molinos which I referred to a few moments ago, exhibited to us both of these elements which are essentially irreconcilable, and which go on contending forever as Jacob and Ishmael contended together in the womb.

So long as these two principles are contending in the silent soul of some individual we cannot see them,—they are politically unimportant. The church is therefore able to be indulgent towards the sufferer. The church is able to make its yoke easy in individual cases.

NOTES ON RELIGION

The experience of fourteen hundred years has provided the theory for every sort of private indulgence. The result is that so far as doctrine or conduct is concerned, one may be a good Catholic and believe or do almost anything, so long as one concedes the authority of the church.

One cannot, of course, remain a good Catholic and yet refuse to submit. If you refuse to submit, you become a symbol of opposition: your case takes on an enormous significance at once. You must be put down,—burned or excommunicated,—because for the church to refrain from doing so is for the curia to abandon its claim and to abdicate. This metaphysical claim is the symbol of a power so very awful that you, individually, have to be burned. They may love you, but they are obliged to burn you. You, on your side, by being burned are doing your maximum of protest. Both Bruno and the Pope who burns Bruno are playing fortissimo: each has thrown double sixes. By this method of fighting, the curia retains its imaginative position, retains the power, if it is losing in one place, to build itself up elsewhere. The Roman church regards itself as the custodian of the Jewish Scriptures—i. e. of all kinds of truth. To make any compromise about this, to concede

NOTES ON RELIGION

rights to science, or to scholarship, or to individual piety, would be to cast away the divining rod with which it claims to find the living waters for humanity. Moreover, the church is an organization. Individual kings have sometimes abdicated, but no organization has ever abdicated; and beside this, the whole battery of Catholic philosophy, dogma, ritual, and discipline makes any such course impossible for the Roman church. The old Roman machinery and paraphernalia of government *can* only work in one way. The men educated in that tradition *can* only act in one way. If anything is certain in this world it is that the Roman church cannot ever become Liberal. The Catholic liberals of all ages (quite recently the Modernists), are always obliged to submit, because they concede some general powers of government to Rome. Of course Rome will name the limits of those powers, and when she does so, these gentlemen must submit or leave the church.

Let us now reflect upon a strange matter. The ideas, nay, even the words and images of this whole controversy remain much the same throughout the ages. But the substance changes. A few years ago I read that very truthful book, Fogazzaro's novel, *Il Santo*, which is devoted to showing the embarrass-

NOTES ON RELIGION

ment into which the Papacy must be thrown to-day by the appearance of a saint. The book appears to the Protestant mind to be an indictment of Catholic practices; and I believe that the aged and very distinguished author was obliged to humiliate himself and to recant in some way. The thing which most impressed me, however, about the story was that the most frightful powers of the Roman church had vanished. The Santo, who resists all temptations and avoids all snares, should logically have been burnt in the market-place. And yet, so far as I could find out, all that the pontiff of the story did to the Saint was to beg him to "move on." The Saint became an unpleasant figure at the door of the Vatican; and so the Church persuaded him to remove himself and to live in disgrace at Sorrento. I began to reflect inwardly as to this unexpected ending of the novel; and I wondered who was to blame, and who was responsible for this change in Roman conditions, and why it was that the Saint could not be conveniently burned to-day in the market-place. And it seemed to me upon reflection that *the whole modern world* was the unity which controlled the situation. One would never find this out through any process of reasoning. There is something outside of

NOTES ON RELIGION

our reasoning which controls us and makes us what we are.

There is something outside of even the Roman Catholic Church which controls her and makes her what she is. She also and in spite of her history is a part of the present, and it is merely in order to find out her relation to this present that I have been studying the past. So, also, each individual is not merely a thing of to-day. Each of us does consciously or unconsciously represent in himself the whole process of humanity. We cannot separate ourselves from the past; we can only seek to establish our true relation to it. The Catholic church in all its disintegrations should be regarded as a crumbling unity. It is the greatest historic residuum in the world, the most perfect piece of the past, and it gives us a more accurate measure for judging of the past than any other extant institution. It is made up, as we have seen, of two very separable elements:—the love of God, and the control of men. The first is the divine and mystical portion which can be understood only by those who have personal experience of religion. The second is the work-a-day element which every one can understand. It consists in the using of influence over men to secure particular ends. All

NOTES ON RELIGION

governments do this, sometimes gently, sometimes cruelly, sometimes with horrible tyranny. The thing itself, however, needs no explanation. We all understand it.

It is the union of true religion with a perfected system of social tyranny that gives the Roman church its particular character. I do not hesitate to call that religion "true" which gives a man an abiding consciousness of God. I know that true religion in this sense combines well and easily with every form of vice, ambition, and cruelty whether Protestant or Catholic. Nevertheless, it seems to me that the consciousness of God is just so much truth, and should be so regarded for clarity's sake: the evil part can then be considered by itself.

The object of the Roman Catholic Church in its governmental capacity is to confuse these two elements. The Church Dominant says to a man: "I am your consciousness of God; therefore obey." This involves a confusion of mind and upon that confusion rests the whole structure.

In writing the opening account of the Roman church in this paper, I could not help feeling that the Roman Catholic layman would read it with a smile; because my paper appears to deal with externals, with the history, the bells, the pomp, etc.,—and I seem to leave

NOTES ON RELIGION

out of account the one little hot thread of heart's devotion which really holds the whole church together—I mean the approach to Christ through the Sacraments. I look daily upon the faces of Roman Catholic women, and see often a depth of quiet devotion that explains life to them and makes them happy. These women are not sunk in a brutish superstition. They are holy people. "What then? What would you have? Where is the evil?" The evil lies in the support which all good Catholics, including these saints, give and must give to some of the most horrible iniquities of the world. In order to understand the matter you must take a cross-section of society. You must take the dollar given by the devout Boston housemaid and trace it into the pocket of the Catholic spy in Berlin.

I do not devote this paper to laying bare the historic abuses of the Roman church, but to explaining the principle at the bottom of them. Those abuses are very familiar to us all. No Catholic denies them. They multiply in each generation according to the complexion of the age. They are, on the other hand, the means through which humanity is saved from Rome because, by the operation of natural law, Rome always uses methods which a little shock the world's conscience. As the world

NOTES ON RELIGION

improves, Rome improves; but the relation remains.

Classic antiquity knew no such wickedness as was revealed to us during the Middle Ages. Before Christ had showed new depths in human goodness the corresponding depths of iniquity could not be imagined.

The object of this paper is to spread the news that all the abuses of the Roman Church are made possible only through their connection with a sentiment which is holy. We must remember these things in regarding the present; we must remember them in reviewing the past. We must wade through the worst acts of the Inquisition in the sixteenth century or stand over the dreadful history of Naples in the nineteenth without forgetting that all this crime, horror, and tyranny is a perversion of a divine intuition in the hearts of men. This is the evil,—this spiritual perversion; not theft, not the rack, not the jail, not the externals of tyranny which show so plainly in history, but the invisible intercepting of Christ's message at the source, and the maiming of minds at the birth.

You can not, to be sure, save the Papacy even by this reasoning. The Papacy will cling to its abuses, which grow fainter with the centuries and as Europe becomes better policed.

NOTES ON RELIGION

You can probably never rescue the Papacy and make it into a mere spiritual dominion, seeking no money, seeking only salvation for men. But by remembering the truth in which all this mass of error is founded, you can retain a true relation to a very large portion of humanity both living and dead, and can avoid establishing a relation towards Catholicism which is both dogmatic and inhuman.

I confess that in Europe passion has always ruled the day, and Religion herself has very generally been lost in the scuffle, during the wars of religion. The history of Protestantism has been the history of the gradual separation of private piety from church domination. It has been the history of the putting apart of those two familiar ideas: the love of God, and the control of church. How firmly fixed in the European mind was the notion that there must exist somewhere a church control may be seen in the bigotry of Luther, of Calvin,—of all early Protestantisms. So deeply were the roots of the Roman Empire entwined in the mental habit of Europe.

We have seen that the Roman Church which was once the government of the whole of Europe, was gradually shuffled off through the rise of new national feelings, and of new kinds of piety and learning until the Organi-

NOTES ON RELIGION

zation which had ruled all things was left as merely a great secret society with its inherited dogmas and practices, and its Great Claim. That Claim was and is to tie up again those two ideas which every force in society appears to be driving asunder, to confuse ideas which are daily and yearly becoming more inconfusible and distinct. In the early days of the church, while her enemies were external, she needed but a simple philosophy. But as her internal troubles grew fiercer, and as quasi-civil war within her own boundaries grew hot, her thinkers were put to newer theories. She was obliged to use her wits more and more in keeping up her prestige. And thus it came about that a worser morality was developed during the Reformation than had ever arisen before in the church, or perhaps in the history of the world. A similar thing happened, and for similar reasons, during the struggle of the Slave Power in America between 1830 and 1860. During the years when our Slave Power found it necessary to shorten its hand in order to sustain its ascendancy, ethical theory was stretched so as to cover practices that were more and more revolting to right feeling and common instinct. Similarly during the Reformation, when the Church believed her very life to

NOTES ON RELIGION

be at stake, her practices became less scrupulous and more severe; and to cover some of these developments a philosophy was required. This leads me to speak of the rise of the Jesuit Order.

The Roman Catholic Church was shaken to its foundation by the revolt of northern Germany. Luther had defied her and she had not been able to punish him. One would think that such an outcome would have led to reforms within the church and the triumph of liberal ideas. But, as a matter of fact, it led to a reaction and to a counter-reformation within the church, which put the extreme conservatives in power. In religious struggles all violence, harsh words, wars, persecutions, etc., tend to put the extremists in power in both camps. The Roman Church, through the triumph of Luther's cause, had the benefit, as it were, of being persecuted. It became fiercer than ever. And there arose a man of genius who personified this new fierceness. Ignatius Loyola was a man of genius in that he builded better than he knew. His function was to re-embody the authoritative idea, to reduce to human algebra that part of the church's dealing with humanity through which she caused men to obey. We have seen that the idea of authority was always in the Ro-

NOTES ON RELIGION

man system. Authority was the *second* idea, always at struggle with the *first* idea, always interfering between the soul and the soul's consciousness of God. Loyola perceived that Authority rested partly on idea, but more largely on *training*.

He therefore established a society upon the single thought, Obedience; and he trained his neophytes until they became mere creatures of the order,—they must become like dead bodies in the hands of the General. To kill the individual soul was the aim of Loyola, to create men who had nothing, did nothing, thought nothing, desired nothing, knew nothing *as individuals*, was the Jesuit aim; and it was accomplished. Loyola perceived freshly what had always been the essence of the Church Dominant, and he produced a stronger solution of this thing than was in the old system. If the old was gunpowder, the new was dynamite.

While Loyola's invention is undoubtedly the most evil thought in history, and while the Society of Jesus is probably the tightest knot of reactionary influence upon the globe, we must not credit Loyola with an understanding of these results. The Protestant mind attributes insincerity to persons whose very essence was sincerity, whose very soul and

NOTES ON RELIGION

being were absorbed into their work. Loyola was one of these men. Let us, if we can, perceive that there is only one error in the whole headlong, sacrificial self-oblation of Loyola and of his followers, namely, that the oblation and prostration are not done quite absolutely to God himself. There is an intervention: there is a third party. Someone is taking charge of these souls besides God.

Loyola seems to have intended to prop up the Papacy; and the special vows of obedience which the Jesuit makes to the Pope, seem intended to supply the Pope with a sort of inner body-guard, to counteract, as it were, the democracy of the College of Cardinals. At any rate, through Loyola's Order, the reactionaries were knitted together into a secret Society, or cabal. The kernel of mediaeval thought and practice has thus been preserved down to our own day in the *Institutes* of St. Ignatius. Loyola created an *imperium in imperio*, a body whose members place the interests of their own order above the interests of their faith. The Society was very soon used as a means of controlling the Papacy. The Order has, at times, been dissolved by the Papacy, and, at times (as at present), has worked in concert with the Papacy. But

NOTES ON RELIGION

the Jesuit Order, as an influence, is always separable from the Roman Catholic Church at large. Since Loyola's time, then, the Roman Catholic Church has moved forward as a unity; yet, in the minds of its managers there is a vertical division which makes a schism (invisible to the outer world), between the Jesuits and the rest of the hierarchy. The hierarchy is thus divided into two groups which though they generally *work* together *think* apart.

The Jesuits are men who have been at school and college together. They have been through the severest training ever devised for the purpose of subjugating the private will, and they have done this in company with one another. The comradeship from early childhood in an exclusive, secret society, and obedience to the same General, make the Jesuits into a clique, almost into a species by themselves. In theory all sentiments of race, language, and origin should have been sedulously rubbed away through a regimen of changing domicile and perpetual routine, until the perfected Jesuit cannot find in the whole wide world another man like himself, except it be a Jesuit.

The Jesuits are the principal teaching order of the Roman church. Thus if you apply

NOTES ON RELIGION

to the Archbishop in New York for some aid in church matters, he will, as soon as he understands that a question of doctrine is concerned, ring a bell and ask if Father So-and-So is at leisure; saying, that as the matter is one of theology, the Jesuits will attend to it. You will then be ushered in to the sanc-tum of a highly-educated English priest, perhaps from Stonyhurst, who will deal with you as ably and as readily as the most perfected cash register deals with the confiding five cent piece. So, also, at the close of some great day in Roman Catholic history,—some day when a glorious victory has been won, a great step forward has been taken, a newspaper founded, or a tablet to the Pope attached to the exterior of a United States Custom House,—if you should enter late at night into the Archbishop's Palace on Madison Avenue, you would find the Cardinals and Princes of the Church sitting up in solemn conclave, eager, powerful men. And if you should linger on unobserved until the hour of parting came, you would see all of these great men retire and disperse with holy salutations; going in two bands, and in two different directions, the Jesuits in one direction, and the non-Jesuits in another, each band to its own lair to talk it over. We must return to the Ref-

NOTES ON RELIGION

ormation, however, if we would understand these doings in Madison Avenue.

The practical genius of Ignatius Loyola knitted the Papacy together by making allegiance easy. We have seen that the Church Dominant had from the earliest times made use of its power to condone sin as an engine of government. Loyola and his followers developed this idea into a science, and they did so at the very moment when such a philosophy was required in order to keep many powerful, rich, skeptical, worldly people in the church. By dividing the substance of religion from the form, Loyola and his followers revealed the very essence of all religious malpractice. From his time dates that system of dialectic by which evil is good and good evil, according to the interests of the church.

The invention of Loyola greatly accelerated the decay of the Roman system; because the segregation of all that was most conservative in that system into a society whose works were very visible, kept the worst abuses of the Roman Church always to the fore in European politics, and brought into sharper and ever sharper contrast the cruel workings of the church, and the benevolent tendencies of modern civilization. The Jesuits have brought discredit upon the Catholic church much as

NOTES ON RELIGION

Tammany Hall brings discredit upon Democracy. Each shows the extreme abuse of a system. The difference between the two cases is that Tammany Hall is more open to outer influence than the Society of Jesus is. Tammany Hall improves as fast as the New York citizen improves; whereas the Jesuit is an artificial product who is continuously being produced by a hot-house education, and his order is therefore less open to the general influences of modern society than any other body of civilians in the world. Nevertheless, that society is, in a practical sense, affected by the modern world which surrounds and encloses it (as we have seen by Foggazaro's *Santo*), and we must beware of regarding even the Jesuit Order as a thing by itself and wholly foreign to ourselves.

If most Protestants do not know that there is such a thing as a good Jesuit, this is due to the Jesuit record in history. The desire for domination and for money, the vacuity of idea, the vulgarity of aim in the Jesuits has left them a reputation that does not shine. And yet there have always been men among them who exhibited the military virtues, courage, obedience, self-sacrifice in the highest degree. These very virtues are the ones which lead to the worst vices of the moral and in-

NOTES ON RELIGION

tellectual world, namely to the destruction of private conscience or of private mind.

In one sense the Protestant can never meet the mind of the Jesuit; because the Jesuit is forbidden to hold private opinions. His talk must be formal. Yet the Protestant ought to use every effort to see the good in these men, a goodness which beams out of some of them in spite of our analysis, which condemns their system of education and condemns the history of their order. The Catholic is precluded by dogma from conceding true holiness to Protestants. But the Protestant has no excuse for looking with a jaundiced eye upon the saints in the Roman Catholic Church.

One more general remark about the Roman Church and I will speak about America. The Hierarchy must be thought of as a vast moving caravanserai, with a wonderful outfit of instruments and paraphernalia for attracting and ruling the peoples of the earth. It is a complex, roaming, wallowing wave of power, the residuum of the ancient Roman power, and it becomes more and more detached from its geographical base, as it rolls across humanity with the momentum of the centuries behind it. This coil of human influences picks up men and nations in one place and drops men and

NOTES ON RELIGION

nations in another place. The Great Need of humanity cries to Rome. The hunger of men for a union with God cries out to her. On the other hand, her old subjects are constantly in revolt. They are over-taxed, kept in ignorance and bondage and separated from modern progress. Thus Rome is constantly losing adherents in her old dominions ; and, as she does so, she moves on to new countries with her propaganda.

In the middle of the nineteenth century it became evident to minds far less acute than those of the great Roman Ecclesiastics that the Papacy was losing ground in Europe and must turn to America. It must come to the United States and grow up with the country. It has done so. We have had the Roman Catholic question during the last fifty years ; but we have not had time to attend to it. In Europe, where the history of this Religion has been enacted, the whole matter is understood by the educated classes. The Wars of Religion have never been forgotten, and the ever-present ultra-mundane question burns openly. In Europe people are not afraid to speak of the Roman Catholic Church. But America was settled by Protestants after the end of the Wars of Religion, or by Protestants who escaped the question by coming here. We have

NOTES ON RELIGION

had no religious question in America and our people have forgotten what the question means. Besides this we have been engaged in making money; we have been harassed by our slavery troubles; in more recent times we have been preoccupied with practical reforms. We have not been interested in religion; we have forgotten the principles of the matter. The extraordinary ignorance of our people in matters of history, their belief in destiny, their inability to stop and reflect about anything, their desire that our politics shall not contain any religious question, their sense of security, due to the presence of the Atlantic Ocean between themselves and Europe—all these things have led the Americans of the last fifty years to hide their heads in the sand in regard to the doings of the Roman Catholic Church. Our press is timid and public opinion approves. In our politics the question has been shunned as far as possible: such is our wisdom. We are afraid of getting angry: we would hurt no one's feelings. The instinct of the Protestants has, on the whole, been an instinct of silence. This has worked in well with the aims of Rome; for, be it observed, while Rome can work in silence, opposition to Rome involves publicity.

Rome has been the first to take the field in

NOTES ON RELIGION

America. Within the last few years a great Catholic forward movement has been in progress: Rome has proclaimed openly her intention of ruling America. For many years the chief income of the Papacy has been drawn from America: and now it appears, we are to become a Roman Catholic country. Rome has spoken.

Her method of speech is the same as it was in the Sixteenth Century—a rasping arrogance. It is a curious fact that while the Protestant is abjured not to injure the feelings of the Catholic, the great Roman Ecclesiastics, Cardinals, and Archbishops, make it a point to speak with calculated contempt of all that the Protestant American holds dear—his patriotism, his religion, his schools, and his domestic life. The Catholic layman does not do this—partly because of his kindly feelings, partly because he is not in the secret of the movement. He is indeed the middle point about which the whole movement turns; but he is *not yet* in the whirl of it.

The man whose allegiance is ultimately at stake in this contest, the man about whom the battle rages, is the Roman Catholic layman. The object of the Hierarchy is always to secure the support of this man for its extremest claims (whatever they may happen to

NOTES ON RELIGION

be). The method of securing this support was, in modern times, perfected by the Jesuits and consists in the assumption of an arrogant, overbearing tone and the doing of everything within the church's power to irritate Protestant feeling. If the Protestants respond to this treatment in kind; if they become angry or indulge in violent denunciation of the Catholic Church, then the Catholic layman naturally becomes excited and is thrown into a mood in which he is apt to support the extremists of his own party. At any time when the Jesuits are in control of the Papal See a hectoring, squally policy may be looked for in foreign countries. The situations which arise as the result of this method, give special power to the Jesuit Order; because that Order is military in form and thrives in war times. It was through a reaction of this sort that Bismarck was goaded into persecuting the Jesuits in the seventies. The result was a consolidation of Catholic feeling behind the Jesuit Order. The Roman Catholics have held the balance of power in the Reichstag ever since.

The Papacy, then, from time to time, assumes a militant attitude in Protestant countries. Its general tone may be expressed as follows: "We intend to rule: we despise you: we will speak and act with open contempt of

NOTES ON RELIGION

your sacred things. But woe unto you if you murmur or lisp a word against our sacred religion. Unless you sit silent and accept our insolence, pay us our money, destroy your own social system and substitute ours, we will raise such a revolt, and such an outcry that you'll have a religious war on your hands." This reasoning is largely unconscious; and it is at the bottom of the present Catholic movement in America.

The Papacy, for reasons of its own, believes that the time has now come for a great uprising; the Church must show its power. Our Press is easily ruled. Catholic business men are marshalled behind the advertisement columns: the rest follows. You would think, to read the American papers, that the whole nation was thrilled to the marrow over a lawn-party given to Monseigneur Flanagan at Hoboken, or the blessing of a brass farthing which Father Tim found in the charity-box on his first Sunday in the east hundred-and-fourteenth street chapel just fifteen years ago. The doings and the pictures of great prelates are recorded with unctuous servility in the great dailies. Their insolent sermons are printed at great length. The social life of Roman Catholicism is chronicled. English Jesuits adorn the drawing-rooms of Irish mag-

NOTES ON RELIGION

nates, and rich American ladies besiege the foyers of the Prelates, laying their great position, their sins and their jewels at the feet of Rome. It would be easy to write an account of this movement that would amuse posterity. And yet we ought not to forget that there is at the present time a sincere religious movement going on all over America. It can be felt in every church, in every political party, in every reform movement. There is a great and deep ground-swell of religion in America; and this lifts also the Roman Catholic Forward Movement into dignity, and gives it heart and heat. The goodness and beauty in it cannot be denied; nor ought anyone to wish to diminish the love of God—just because it inhabits Roman Catholic bosoms.

Our task is harder; our task is to hold fast to the good, yet to understand the evil. We need not to grow angry; but we need never submit. The problem of America—the problem for the leaders of thought in America to-day, is to get this subject opened up, upon clear lines, without passion. It is not necessary for the American to be eaten up by Rome, to have his public moneys directed to a foreign secret society, and the books in his public libraries censored by the Jesuits. It is not necessary for him to sit still while his

NOTES ON RELIGION

children are taught that patriotism is a sin and that the priest shall control in politics. It is not necessary for him to admit that his wife is a concubine and his children are illegitimate, because the church of Rome did not sanction his marriage. If the American thinks that the doctrines I have mentioned will refute themselves, or that they will not work in our climate, he is mistaken. Those doctrines are working very smoothly in our climate to-day. Our duty is to break silence at once, and to break it with a mace that is heavy and calm.

We may take it for granted that the Roman Church in America will be what it has been in the Protestant countries since the Reformation, namely: hostile to education, hostile to the individual, an enemy to science; the declared opponent of all goodness save its own. The Roman Church cannot be otherwise. In its essence, and by its own professions, it must be these things. I am not defaming it: I am stating what it states. I am repeating its utterances. Strange to say, when a Protestant makes such statements about the Roman Church they are regarded as offensive; but when the Pope makes them, they are divinity.

We may, I think, take for granted that in the end, the powers of the modern world will control in America, and that the domination

NOTES ON RELIGION

of Rome will be rejected. The question is how far that Church shall get before it is checked, *how Catholic* this country shall have become before the tide turns. I have no desire to extinguish the Catholic faith; but to arouse the Catholic layman to the situation, and to beg the Protestant layman to take heed of it. The old mediæval situation is with us once more. It requires clear thought and benevolence; because our real enemy is not religion. The real enemy is confused thought and bitter feeling. Our need is the development of intellect, the rise of spiritual interests, the awakening of new individual power in breasts both Catholic and Protestant throughout the land.

Consider what the average American citizen is to-day. He is a man with faint religious interests, unused to the handling of his own political affairs. (They have been until quite lately entrusted to middle-men.) He is apt to be a partisan extremely unwilling to stand up alone under any circumstances; very fearful of making enemies; very content in making money; extraordinarily and uniquely ignorant of the history of the Roman Church. The Roman Catholic layman in America knows little of the history of his church: no more does the Protestant. To induce such a man as I have described (whether Protestant or Catho-

NOTES ON RELIGION

lic), to think clearly about the relations between religion and politics, to inform himself accurately, to speak openly, to act deliberately, is a hard matter. You wish him to save American education: Alas, he has no philosophic or historic education. You ask him to protect the public treasury: He has for long years left it in charge of his business manager. You beseech him in the name of liberty of conscience and of the Right to worship God to awaken out of his dream: These appeals mean little to a mind that has forgotten that there ever was any serious trouble about religion in the world, and that cannot see how such things are of importance.

On the other hand consider the seductions which active participation in the work of a great secret society—the forward Catholic Movement—must have for just such a mind as I have described. The man is asked to work in an organization where he will be supported and sustained at every moment. He works as a partisan—he works for particular and comprehensible ends, generally the getting of money out of the government and the putting of his own pals into office. He is helped forward in his business. This is the sort of work he understands—namely, practical politics. He retains his party affiliations. He

NOTES ON RELIGION

does not need to know anything, nor to examine, think upon, speak upon, or decide any matter except according to instructions. As for religion, he is provided with it; and as I have said above, it is true religion. There is true religion in it for the most part. At least I believe so.

It is a gloomy view of the matter which I have sketched in the last paragraph. If this were the whole truth the world would go straight to perdition. If the forces of good and evil were in reality so arranged as we think we perceive them to be, the evil would always win. But there is always error in our analysis, and the error is always of the same sort. The error consists in our not allowing enough for the invisible power of Goodness. The real battle is never a battle *between* different kinds of people, as, for instance, between Catholics and Protestants, or between good Protestants and bad Protestants, good Jesuits and bad Jesuits. The battle is within the heart of each man. The enduring factors of life are deep and trembling things, which dogma cannot petrify nor authority control.

Let us regard our American troubles from the standpoint of universal history. Did not the education of modern Europe come about

NOTES ON RELIGION

through this same controversy; and was not the Reformation conducted by Catholic laymen? Every man in this land who is pursuing truth with unselfish devotion is combatting the temporal power of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy—every scientist, every philanthropist, every politician, every writer, every teacher, every priest. You who look on the whole movement from without, do you not know that the real breach, the real remedy, must come from within? Look upon no man as your enemy. Do not regard the Roman Catholic mind as your enemy. In reality you are a part of that mind. Resist not evil. Let the energy by which your own vision reaches the next man go forward with the power of a natural process. He is you. He is reachable with your idea. Though he were the Pope himself, your thought may reach him. Nay, it does.

If you study the last four centuries you will find that the real Reformation came neither from the Protestants nor from the Catholics, but from something which was about equally inherent in each of them, something which, in spite of their antagonisms, somehow edged itself into the world. It is this something which has changed the world. One man will say that this element is the influence of Christ.

NOTES ON RELIGION

another that it is due to an escape from the influence of Christ, still another that it comes through learning, or through industrial progress. We cannot be sure as to any of these conclusions. We can only see that the whole outcome has arrived as the operation of God, and has always gone forward apparently against the will of everybody.

It is then not without relief that I find this Roman question lying across our path in America. The historic continuity of mankind meets us here, and steers us back to ideas which have been foreign to us only because all ideas have been foreign to us. Behold, we are re-awakening to spiritual and religious truth; and we find ourselves facing the very matters which occupied us before we fell asleep.

II

THE EFFECT OF HEBRAIC THOUGHT ON WESTERN EUROPE

CONSIDER the mixture of good and evil in the world, and how we can never quite get an unmixed sample of either. It is the same with truth and falsehood. Our statements always contain a little of each. I say this here because I would not have the folly of my words caught at—as if I thought to scoop up truth, and make a present of it to the reader. Truth is something which glows and beckons, and, at times, approaches and descends upon us—encloses and possesses us; but it remains a mystery. Those profound sayings which appear to be absolute strands of living truth always profess themselves to be mere symbols.

It was the Jew who discovered God; and Christ, who re-delivered God to us, was a Jew. A Jew, yet much more than a Jew. The ancient Hebrew race knew religion, and laid the foundations for morality, as the Greeks did for the fine arts. No one has added a

NOTES ON RELIGION

line to the Bible, whether to the Old or to the New Testament. Whence comes this natural ascendancy in spiritual matters, this insight, which the ancient Jew possessed? Perhaps it comes from racial, ancestral, age-long pre-occupation. The Semitic wise men had been handling these themes for thousands of years. Certainly the book of Job exhibits a school of practical ethics that runs straight up into celestial speculation—showing a gamut of thought and a vigor of expression that have never since been reached—except by the Jew.

The God of the Jews was at first a racial God; but the mind of the Jew was stronger than his patriotism, and by degrees the racial idea of piety was supplanted by a universal idea. All through the Old Testament we find the thought of Jehovah cracking the old Mosaic Dispensation. You can see the seams in it here and there, from Genesis onward. A Universe has been discerned through the rifts, and wine has broken the cask. Also, in the New Testament, Christ's power shatters the whole structure of the Mosaic Dispensation till you can hardly find the frame work; and yet the adumbration of a Christ has been at the back of that Jewish Theology. The New Testament, without the Old, can be but half-comprehended. The very figures of

NOTES ON RELIGION

speech are the same in each, and half of Christ's thought is to be found in Moses.

Let us now turn, almost at random, to the sayings of the Jews, and examine a few of the metaphors of this old Wisdom, in order to illustrate the intellectual heights at which these Semitic thinkers habitually walked. "The battle is not to the strong, neither is the race to the swift. The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. . . . As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all."

With all this profundity, with all this human feeling, there is never a note of falsetto in Jewish sentiment. The poetry of the Psalms and of the Prophets touches many kinds of religious feeling—joyous, sad, mystic, impassioned, elegaic; yet it is always robust. The straining after religious emotion which characterizes Christianity in Western Europe was not seen in Isaiah. If you contrast any page of mediæval piety with a page of the Psalms, or contrast any legend or anecdote out of the Middle Ages with one from the New Testament, you will find that the desire to *experience religion* is what characterizes Eu-

NOTES ON RELIGION

ropean Christianity. This straining after emotion began in the earliest Christian era. You might say that this note of hysterical feeling is one of the immediate effects which Jewish thought produced upon the Gentile nature. Jewish thought was like a strong brew that upset the stomach of less hardy men. How could the Roman colonist Augustine, living under the African sun, digest the fiery doctrine of Israel and yet retain the phlegm of Israel? The metaphysics of the Hebrew put Europe to its purgation; and, down to quite recent times—yes, down almost to yesterday—the Western brain has been turned by this Eastern drug: the drug drives us mad. The point at which this general tendency towards emotionalism climaxed was the Roman Mass. Catholics say that no Protestant can have any understanding of the mystical experience which is theirs at every celebration of the Mass. The Mass, they say, is the Secret of the Church's life, and this living foundation of power is what vitalizes the church and keeps it in motion. There is much truth in this claim. The good Catholic can find the centre and focus of his emotional nature at a moment's notice. He has a short cut to religious experience. He has but to go to church and instantly he gets rid of his mind and walks

NOTES ON RELIGION

into his feelings. He leaves his intellectual part at the church door; and if there is anything left of his intellect as he walks up the aisle, he lays it on the altar. The problems of his growing mind are dismissed—for does he not hold truth already? By a single act of submission he gains the consolations of religion, which are, I believe, all the more poignant because they are focalized, localized, dramatized and superinduced by a ritual.

Let each one of us remember the moments of religious exaltation that come to us—sometimes years apart. Let us recall the thought that rose in our minds at such times, "If I could but find my way back to this place I should be a religious person." And the Catholic conceives that he has found the way back. No wonder, then, that he adores his ritual. What he does not understand is that some part of his emotion is due to a paralysis of portions of his nature. One place in which this paralysis shows is in his conversation. His talk is controlled. He himself does not know how much he may utter without a breach of discipline. In this regard Catholicism is very unlike the old Hebrew dispensation which gave men tongues.

The truth seems to be that man ought not to expect frequent or continuous experiences

NOTES ON RELIGION

of emotional religion. If they come like the thief in the night it is well; but human nature is so made that the true revelations cannot be counted upon nor controlled, and that the simulacra or counterfeits of them are always bought at a sacrifice. This was what the old Hebrews knew, and what western Europe has never known but is beginning to find out. That madness and passion, that search for sensation and sensationalism, for rapture and for felt-piety—that use of Judah as a drug—is what for a time enslaved western Europe. The temporal power of the papacy rested upon it.

We have seen how easily the political-minded Romans made use of the new religion in ruling their Empire. Do not blame them. They could no nothing else, under their system. In fact, they themselves became the creatures of the new system. The temptation to monopolize the new source of feeling was not recognized as a temptation at all. It resulted from a sincere illusion on all hands—the illusion, namely, that the interests of the Empire were identical with those of truth. That illusion persists to-day; and every Protestant ought to remember this fact in dealing with the Catholic question. In the early days the German tribes were converted wholesale;

NOTES ON RELIGION

the world was dealt with roundly. There was to be no other power except Rome, whether spiritual or temporal. "Subdued" is the word: Rome subdued the world.

There is a pathological element in Roman Catholic piety. The good Catholic knows religion; but in the learning of it a nerve in his stomach has been depressed, the Church must hold his hand or he sinks. His consolation will be taken from him, his throbbing sense of God's presence will leave him, he is a lost soul if he separates himself from the Church. Therefore he clings and hangs, therefore he submits and recants. The truth is that he has been enjoying a more acute sense of his nearness of God than he could have experienced without the use of a drug. Sensationalism, while seeming to increase his faith, has really undermined it. I am using strong language in order to bring out a difficult idea. Let the reader make allowances. A man's faith is enfeebled when he requires to be feeling, to be feeling his nearness of God.

The ear-mark of mediæval devotion is a preoccupation with the state of one's soul—a sort of medical interest in one's soul. The Jews were either not subject to the evaporation of faith—the occasional coldness, flatness and loss of the sense of religion, from which

NOTES ON RELIGION

the mediæval Christian suffered—or else the Jews had philosophy enough to wait quietly till faith returned, and artistic sensibility enough to refrain from writing about themselves in the meanwhile. Even their penitential Psalms are unselfconscious. The eye of the sinner is on God, rather than on himself. The mediæval Christian, however, is a valitudinarian.

The mediæval sentiment in regard to pain and suffering, to repentance and purgation is tinctured with excess. The desire to experience emotion leads in his case to something very like a disease, to which I can find no analogy in Israel nor in Christ. We know that suffering is generally involved in moral advance, that God is often the celestial surgeon, as Stevenson says. This is one of the great facts of life. But for us to clutch the knife and hug pain is an idea which I cannot find in the New Testament nor in the Old. It comes out of Darkest Christendom. Philosophic historians tell us that this tendency of the mediæval temperament to embrace pain reflects the misery and degradation of the ages just after Constantine, during which civilization was being lost and despair was everywhere dominant. But I rather think that this emotional view of religion was adopted as a

NOTES ON RELIGION

short cut to sanctity. We see evidences of it in the very earliest days of Christianity.

A striving towards salvation seems to have come into the world as the immediate consequence of Christ's teaching. There is an unpleasant flavor in this notion that men are to get something for themselves out of truth—even salvation. And yet this idea seized and occupied the world from St. Paul to Pascal. Schemes of salvation, theories of soul-saving fill the books. These Christians appear to be after something, like carp about bread crumbs.

It is a common experience in settlement work, (as it is in family life) to find selfishness in the children often springing up as the result of pure unselfish care for them on the part of parents and guardians. The young ones get a notion of their own importance and they play the game. I am reminded of this when I remember the divine solicitude of Christ over the welfare of men's souls, and then watch the spirit in which Christ's followers soon took up the work of saving their own.

This desire to secure salvation, this desire to experience religion led men to submit to regimens that should bring on the reaction and, of course, the means of superinducing it became a part of ritual. As time went on this means worked in well with the confes-

NOTES ON RELIGION

sional, the rack, the Inquisition and the other devices for bringing men into conformity through appeals to sensation and sensationalism. The priesthood adopted theories of salvation and summas of philosophy: it wove nets to catch men. Christ became obscured in a labyrinth of rules and practices as to how to get at him, and dogmas as to what he is. There were, as we have seen, really two motive powers at work in the loom that wove this fabric:—first, individual piety in the western mind, seeking a thread to lead it towards the light; and second, Church organization holding these threads.

All of these debasements of Christ's teaching—the emotionalism, the search for salvation, the invention of shibboleths—were parts of the instrumentation through which the lower, less complex, and more sensuous intelligence of Europe made Jewish thought comprehensible to itself. The Roman Church, through the fact that it was a government, thus became the agent during a great many hundred years in oversensitizing its people in a particular manner, and in superinducing certain specific religious experiences. In course of time those evils resulted, whose gross exterior form became known to all the world through the Reformation. A tremendous re-

NOTES ON RELIGION

vulsion followed the exposure of abuses, and the Church lost ground.

In reviewing the whole matter we can see that the mediæval belief that pain is something meritorious, and that it can be manipulated in such a way as to bring on salvation is not in Christ's teaching. It is plain that any recipe which ensures piety—like any recipe which makes art easy—weakens piety—or art. The absence of any such recipe from the Gospels is the most striking thing in them. The Lord's Prayer is the only formular of devotion which one can find in the New Testament; and this prayer is not insisted upon. It seems to have been given by Christ to his followers in a response to a demand, and was probably Christ's own personal prayer. With regard to pain, all theories which regard pain as the parent of piety imply a knowledge of our own needs which we do not possess. We do not know whether we stand in need of pain or not. Let us hope we do not need it; but let us accept it if it comes.

III

THE INDESTRUCTIBILITY OF RELIGION

EVERYBODY is afraid that Religion will be lost. This is the reason always given for every unpleasant thing done in the name of God. The Protestants and Catholics alike fought out their wars of religion with the same end in view. They were and are exactly alike in their determination to save religion and hold up the hands of God. Let us consider the Reformation.

In historic retrospects we must occasionally take in at one sweeping glance a very long period of time, and review the life of the race as if it were the life of one man. Humanity is, indeed, like a mammoth man who requires a thousand years to go through spiritual changes which perhaps in the individual might take place in a decade. We have seen that from the very beginning there was a sickly note in European Christianity, a note of self-commiserating emotionalism hardly to be

NOTES ON RELIGION

found in Judea or in the classic world. After a thousand years of this a reaction set in. The inhabitants of Western Europe, having tasted of the terrible truths of Hebrew thought and having been made very ill by them, began, during the Reformation, to cast off the church and to re-examine the Bible. It looked as if the whole of the Hebrew dispensation were to be thrown overboard and as if the world would return to the chaos of Paganism. Everyone agreed in fearing such an outcome. The early reformers desired to retain Judaism as an instrument of government; but to use this *in their own way*.

As time went on, however, it became apparent that there was no getting rid of Hebrew influence; you might discard the dispensation as government, but it remained as philosophy, as ethics, as poetry, as municipal law. It existed as folk lore and proverb; domestic life was drenched in it. The illumination was in the world. Abuses might obscure it, the Reformation might obscure it; but there was some indestructible truth behind all, which kept boring its way to the light.

IV

MEMORIES AND HALF-THOUGHTS

IT is easy to write about the past, especially about remote history and other people's experience. But to speak of contemporary matters and of one's own relation to religion is hard. All aids and props are withdrawn at once and we stand in mid-air. The fact is that no man knows much about universal truth. There is a certain self-delusion in all coherent writing, especially about religion. It is the saying of a little more than a man knows that makes Theology: all those great tomes come out of it. And yet we feel sure that every fragment of religious experience is somehow part of a whole, and that religion is a unity. The upshot is that although the fragments are undoubtedly parts of a whole, it is not for us to fit them together. This is the very thing that they must do for themselves.

Therefore I leave these little scraps of essays detached and helpless. If they lack the

NOTES ON RELIGION

wit and vitality to order themselves into a system I could never help them by any lumbering endeavour at philosophic coherence.

I

DO NOT GO IN SEARCH OF RELIGION

The Illumination is in the world. We receive it with the prejudices of our education and our geography, with the millionfold half-lights of philosophy and sentiment playing about it, with the atmospheres of nineteen centuries shrouding it and the intimate feelings of our own personal history hallowing it. Is it likely then that any man's account of such a matter will be final? God forbid. Yet I will speak of things which strike me now as true.

During the last one thousand years we have learned one thing—that no matter how ardently a man may wish for a conscious unity with God he must never seek it except directly from God. Man is not to be trusted. We ourselves are not to be trusted. Who knows whether this experience, *religion*, be meant for us? It seems as if they who wait in the ante-chamber in this spirit are already in

NOTES ON RELIGION

the Temple. The power of prayer, the meaning of contemplation, the knowledge of spiritual things—as of strength, intuition, communion, healing—all these things form an ever-advancing indoctrination into the nature of the universe; and this growing wisdom is in its very essence and from the beginning something done to us, and which we must not seek to accelerate. If we will but allow God to do the work without setting up a machine of our own, it will be done wholesomely and we ourselves shall become robust.

We should not endeavor to bring on religion in ourselves or in others. The temptation to push forward in some direction, or to push other people forward towards some door, is a snare of self-will. Through this zeal we push our children down oubliettes. All our intervention between them and God is poison and brings on hysteria. The thing we truly desire must operate in a region beyond all personal will, like the attraction of the moon. Cast a glance at the moon and bid her reveal God to your child; commit the babe to the influence of Apollo, with awe in your heart and you will leave the child's soul more open to the visitation of Christ than if you teach him the New Testament in a proselitizing spirit.

NOTES ON RELIGION

II

TEACHING A CHILD

When your child is young, say your prayers with him and teach him all you know—for this is the truest church of Christ and the best Apostolic Succession. But even then remember that this is but yourself that you teach. It is neither Christ himself nor the child himself. You must leave them together. Consider that Christ was powerless to guide or protect his own doctrines. They were seized by the winds of heaven, and have, at times, been used to make men into devils. Even so are you powerless concerning your children's fate. Christ's doctrines have not made shipwreck nor been lost; neither will it be so with the soul of your boy.

The complexity of life transcends our understanding. Even Christ seems to have looked for a simpler solution—a second coming and wind-up of some sort. But the world goes on, and perhaps we ought not to complain that Christ was wrong in this point; for where should we have been if the Cosmos had come to a wind-up during the first century A. D.? But the truth is that there are in the New

NOTES ON RELIGION

Testament as well as in the Old bits of Semitic Cosmogony that are not for us. And in like manner there will be among the profoundest beliefs of any one of us, bits of personal Cosmogony that are true for us but not for our children.

III

INSTITUTIONS

I WILL not found an institution nor will I pull one down. Institutions will be founded by men who cannot understand this doctrine; and there will be many of them. As I see the need of the world to-day it is a need of depth of piety and of quietude. The people are becoming like paper dolls. They need life of such kind as can only pour into people's hearts through rest and prayer. Shall I therefore found a monastery where fifty monks shall forever pray day and night for the health of mankind? No. I am powerless here, too. The health must be given by the greater miracle and according to its own law. I can add nothing by my contrivance of a monastery. It is a shallow conceit. The monastery exists already and I have my cell in it: I will pray in my cell.

NOTES ON RELIGION

Is not all this matter a matter of symbols? Let every man use what symbols his own education requires and change them as his education advances; and let him accord to other people a like liberty. The patriarch's need was served by a pile of stones. When Abraham worshipped he required but a rude altar. Out of it there grew the middle ages. You and I are just emerging from those middle ages and find our minds filled with its practices. Certain saints and certain skeptics agree upon this idea, and when saint and skeptic agree it is supposed they must be right. Yet here both may be wrong. The saint finds symbols close to his heart; the skeptic sees them close to the saint's heart. Neither saint nor skeptic can put a scalpel between the symbol and Faith; and yet this is what Time does so easily.

Symbols are the outcome, not the cause, of religion. They live as long as faith lives: they die as faith dies. To perpetuate them for theoretic reasons is wrong. Let love perpetuate them; and they will last as long as they ought to last. I believe that if we could see the invisible church as it actually exists in the interlacing of all men in God and with each other through the force that makes them live, the alarm of those who are fostering

NOTES ON RELIGION

religion for fear it will die out would appear ridiculous.

IV

MANY MANSIONS

We all live in many houses which exist, one inside of the other, and unite us with different worlds. There is the House of Art, the House of History, the House of Philanthropy, the House of Philosophy. There is the House of our Social Caste, the House of Business, the House of Pleasure, the House of Grief. And outside of all there is the Mansion of Religion. This mansion, to those who perceive it, encloses all the rest.

The New Testament lies before us at first as a cryptogram. But as we read it and grow into it, it begins to make the walls and roof of our inner house transparent, so that we perceive the outer structure. It enters like a thief and substitutes here and there windows for wall space. It deals with no two natures alike; and its operations are as much beyond our ken and understanding as the nature of the stars. It speaks only in paradoxes; yet they seem to come from the truth at the basis of all things, and to feed the core of us.

NOTES ON RELIGION

The miraculousness which we sometimes find in art is here and there only seen in metaphysics; for the cryptogram passes over and fixes itself in the heavens and in the heart. It is become a part of the universe. It is everywhere.

v

THE WORDS OF CHRIST

A talisman is something which seems to be a word. The memory apprehends it, the lips utter it. Yet in reality it is a silent thunderbolt, and leaves behind its passage a gash in the cliff. So the story of Christ and the words of Christ are accepted by children as if they were comprehensible. We lisp them as infants. Yet behind them flock ever new meanings. They hold a door open and show us hosts and distances, and powers and miracles, and finally the Might of the Universe. And yet before us lies merely the little book.

You cannot hold this fire at arm's length; for it runs up your arm and takes possession of the brain. You are become incandescent. The doctrines of Christ perpetuate the old Jewish idea that God was one continuous power—being all the life in the universe. So

NOTES ON RELIGION

that all men became as one, transmitting and reflecting that power and becoming themselves perfected by submission and damaged by any form of opposition to the force. Christ takes up this idea, and illustrates it in domestic and social life; in the life of personal religion. Man can by self-will do nothing except injure both himself and others. If he will abandon his will to God the miraculous nature of life will assert itself and make him wholesome. Disease and sin are viewed as one thing.

VI

MODERN SCIENCE AND CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Modern Science has by devious routes arrived at the idea that space is filled with infinite power. And Christian Science must be given the credit for proclaiming the same thought. Contemporary medicine is on the verge of seeing that health is relaxation, and all danger whether to mind or body is due to nervous tension. Any purpose or intention of mind is a variety of quasi-contradiction. The injurious and untrue part of Christian Science consists in its militancy, its *purpose*. It teaches self-advancement, and thus becomes a

NOTES ON RELIGION

mockery and an introversion of religion. To say to oneself "It is the will of God that I shall recover from my sickness," or "It is the will of God that I shall prosper in business," is contradiction in terms. No one can be an orthodox Christian Scientist unless his mind is a little muddled. He believes that a thing can be and yet not be. It is God's will and yet perhaps it isn't. Christian Science thus splits on the same rock that the Roman Church does, namely, the temptation to make use of Christ as an applied force, i. e., to build up a church through the bold statement of a paradox. But Christ's power comes behind and pulls down Christian Science with the same ease with which it has pulled down greater things. Nevertheless, and in spite of its crudities, I am grateful to Christian Science. In its historic aspect it was the portal to a new view of old truth. The whole of modern life is in debt to it; just as in an infinitely deeper sense the whole of modern life is in historic debt to the church of Rome.

Through all the churches, and through all humanity outside the churches there has recently coursed a new sense of the nearness of God. We have become natural men once more. The powers and mysteries which over-cloud Humanity have been restored to us.

NOTES ON RELIGION

We are re-united with the past, not merely with the last eighteen centuries of Christianity or the last four thousand years of Jewish influence, but with the great past, which everywhere gleams with the miraculous, and which through this gleam is sanctified and made human. When I think of the Agnostics of 1850, and of the kiln-dried philosophic epoch of my own youth, I feel like one who has escaped with his soul alive from the burning ruins of Sodom and Gomorrah.

VII

THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTIANITY

The world has survived many kinds of Christianity. Why is it that we cannot survive Christ himself, and come to the bottom of his influence? Why is it, that having created the Middle Ages through one kind of partial comprehension which endured for one thousand years, he is now creating a new civilization through the new kinds of partial comprehension which will certainly qualify the next thousand years? The reason is that the birth of truth which came through Christ is fuller than our own account of it. His life

NOTES ON RELIGION

gives truth accurately, our statements weakly and inaccurately. Any philosophic abstractions written down give, as it were, a chemical statement of things as they do not exist. Christ in the New Testament by his character, conduct and words gives the bread and meat in which chemistry is lost in reality. Bread will endure till the end of the world.

Whatever it was that Christ signified, the idea required for its deliverance the totality of Christ himself. It is more than a philosophy. It will not remain written on a slate. It cannot be read in a book. It is gradually delivering itself in the course of the centuries through the bodies and souls of men.

VIII

THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

Was the very nature of life in the universe changed through Christ's existence, or by his life? We do not know enough about the nature of life to say: but it is quite probable. All that we know about God is his continuity, backward and forward, up and down and across. The element of time being illusory, like the emptiness of space, it is very likely that the nature of Being is qualified by every

NOTES ON RELIGION

event, and of life by every life. How can it be otherwise?

There are many people who, like Phillips Brooks, not to speak of all the Catholic saints, actually feel Christ in their bosoms. It has of recent years, I mean during the last few decades of skepticism, become a mental habit for people to classify such experiences as illusory. But the reality of continuous power cannot be called an illusion. The most unlike and most invisible things go hand in hand in human history; and some kind of mysticism is always a motive power in human affairs. The saint seems to be an absurd person to those who are not in the secret; yet the saint always has enormous practical influence. Why should any sensible man turn his attention even for a moment upon Francis of Assisi? Yet Francis is today commonly regarded as the Father of the Renaissance. The truth is that *after the fact* the scientist accepts with complacency the most outrageous violations of his theory. He says it was long ago; men were different then, etc. The miraculous nature of ordinary life is a thing not perceived by these people in regard to their own times. They perceive it in the past and explain it by reference to the unknown.

I remember thinking Phillips Brooks an ab-

NOTES ON RELIGION

surd figure with his Christ in his bosom, a deceived person who went about exhorting the world and deceiving others. And now I see him as a man through whose bosom passed the axis of an indestructible force, which joined him with all men. This is the true church of Christ. It was Christ that revealed this structure which passes between man and man, and it is his influence that keeps revealing it freshly. I am not offended if you call this river of life—this immortal core of God-head—the mystical body of Christ, so long as you leave it there nakedly in the universe and do not try to clap a cover on it or claim it for your sect. All men are part of it; nor is there any belief, conduct or experience through which a man can forfeit his membership in it.

IX

THE SALVATION ARMY. TOLSTOI. NIETZSCHE

The numerous and good evangelists who smite the drunkard with “Jesus loves thee!” and thereby in a moment relax the cords of his heart, are not—what they seem—mere men of a phrase. You and I cannot lift their divining-rod. They are vessels of fire. Through

NOTES ON RELIGION

their hand flows a force that scarifies the sinner's viscera, and brings back his flesh as the flesh of a child.

There have always been men of personal gift, who could fix a focus upon the hearts of their fellowmen. Christ was not the first to do this kind of miracle. But Christ showed the norm and principle at the bottom of the matter. His influence grinds men's souls into lenses.

Christianity swallowed up all other religions in Western Europe and one cannot find a sample of a saint except a Christian saint. So we are all creatures of Christ. (I am speaking here historically—as one might say, “every European musician today is a creature of Bach.”) The Anchorites and Evangelists, the Abbots and the Popes, yes, even the Abbés and Court confessors are more or less distant echoes and caricatures of Christ. Think of Charlemagne and his legend. What a strange image of Christ is there projected! Could one by a whole life-time of contemplation catch the truth about any one epoch, or understand a single character in history—in Christian history—unless one were familiar with Christ and his story? All these men are but samples and side-lights upon Christ's influence. Consider Bunyan: consider Aquinas:

NOTES ON RELIGION

consider General Booth. The historian, unless he deceived himself, would fall dead. The historian is preserved through the superficiality of his thought. He writes a chapter on Pascal and goes out to lunch. Pascal indeed!—what a complexity of intellectual power, of sickness, beauty, error, heroism. The world is full of these incalculable and shooting forms of genius that have been released through Christ's thought, and circulate often elliptically like erring meteors.

But what I was about to say is this, that the crystallization of Christianity into government which began in Augustine's time and climaxed with Innocent III, had the effect of petrifying and sealing up many forms of Christ's influence which have since broken loose amid the downfall of the old ecclesiastical regime. The New Testament influence during the centuries since the Reformation has been filling the world with new kinds of Christ—a Christ of hospitals, of toleration, of benevolence and brotherhood, in the extremest case, a Christ without theology. I see this man today walking about on all sides of us and blessing the world. He is as certainly a product of Christian influence as was Saint Bernard.

His power of utterance is weak, because he does not recognize the source of his own be-

NOTES ON RELIGION

iefs. He uses blunted words and factory-planed ideas. His song is prose. What he means can only be said in Hebrew; and he has forsaken the language. Yet through all his ground glass shines Christ's teaching and Christ's feeling. When I see one of these men throwing his life into service I say, Hath not this man cast in more than they all?

There are other types of Christ's influence which modern times have made possible. There is the great fog-minded, Promethean Tolstoi, shifting his huge limbs in vain to find ease upon his crag. There is Nietzsche, who had the nature of a saint, but who could not compass the rôle of Lucifer—Nietzsche, who by denying the light tore his mind into ribbons. Both of these men are examples of the power of Christ, though they betray it in the form of mental ravage.

Hebrew thought is not a thing to be toyed with by strong men. If it falls askew upon a temperament that is violent,—or encounters on the bias a mind incapable of philosophy, it may wreck the reason.

Tolstoi's religious books, with their tremendous emotion, their lack of training in thought—lack of the first element of Hebrew thought—are like music written for an orchestra by a barbarian of genius—terrible,

NOTES ON RELIGION

contorted, struggling with a power which swells his heart to bursting, undisciplined; yet sincere, human and expressive, yes, in spite of all violations and shortcomings, expressive of Christ, some sort of a Christ who is tearing about within him. Tolstoi believes in submission to the law if it can be found. He submits. He is childish in that he thinks the matter is simpler than it can be made; he would state things in arithmetic that can only be expressed by the higher mathematics—and he does not know the higher mathematics: he despises calculus. Thus, in accepting the New Testament, (which is, indeed, the higher mathematics,) he transmutes it into baby talk. He is not satisfied unless the gospel can be fulfilled by wearing wooden buttons on his clothes or going through a clumsy regime of some sort.

Tolstoi is a little like a very early Christian, like St. Augustine, for instance, in the heat of his feelings and in the circumstance that Hebrew thought does not calm but excites him. Tolstoi had no early philosophic education, and his discovery of Christianity came like a volcano from within him.

Nietzsche had almost the opposite experience. He was a beautiful and holy child, unwisely pushed in religious matters. He

NOTES ON RELIGION

passed from the hothouse of domestic piety straight into the hothouse of University sophistication—into theories of culture, into wire-drawn and imaginative Neo-Platonism. As he had been a prize holy-boy, so he became a prize clever-professor, and sworn enemy to his early faiths. The heart of him, unfed by his new philosophies, and haunted by the memory of Christ, begins to overflow with feeling and finds no outlet. It seizes the door of hate as an issue for love, manages somehow to cut its way out into a nightmare of spiritual truth expressed in terms of falsehood, and goes insane in the process. Of all the victims of Hebrew thought Nietzsche is the saddest. He, the most sophisticated man in Europe, digs up the bugbears of his early life and goes mad over denouncing them in the interests of truth. He discovers that most of the evils in the modern world are traceable to Christ, and he attacks them with a holy zeal which recalls the wars of Religion. An element of fanatical sanctity is in him. There can, indeed, be no question that to certain natures he brought inspiration; he came to them as a spiritual liberator. So complex are the forms of force, and the symbols which truth hides under.

Both of these two ill-educated men, Tolstoi
80

NOTES ON RELIGION

and Nietzsche, are men of moral genius. Both of them feel that Christ is at the bottom of the whole question. But Tolstoi has grasped the Hebrew idea of humility. Tolstoi, with all his surging, is a meek spirit. He recognizes that man is in himself nothing, that our life is negative and that there is no power in us. Nietzsche, on the other hand, confutes this idea. He builds a whole philosophy on the denial of it. He imagines a "superman" who shall do and be one knows not what. The awful reality of man's helplessness is to him a malignant illusion which must be dispelled. He dedicates his life to destroy this illusion. Here we have the philosophic error in Nietzsche's work. In magnifying the nothing, Man, he is in every thought exposing his naked breast to that stream of invisible force which, when meekly received, makes man strong, and, when opposed, destroys him. With rigid muscles Nietzsche holds his forehead to the grindstone, and is annihilated. Where Moses fell on his face Nietzsche stands up and preaches the Superman. His sincerity canonizes him and his sad history is a monument of error; for truth is justified in all her children.

Nietzsche's life gives us the introversion of sane living. With his egoism, his vanity, and

NOTES ON RELIGION

his drugs he re-enacts the tragedy of Ajax, the tragedy of self-assertion. He thus becomes a symbol which points to universal truth; for there is no crime or error that is not a form of self-will. We live in a universe whose development we cannot assist, save by accepting its operations as wiser than we. But in so far as our will becomes dissolved in the acceptance of the processes of God, great powers are momentarily released, and all the wheels turn freely. The goal of our desire can be accomplished only through our resignation of it.

Discussions on Free Will generally result in a deadlock; because the nature of Will itself is not considered. Will is not a steady and constant quantity; but a fluctuating current which changes in the act and process of thought. What I willed yesterday I see was illusion. As our vision widens our will diminishes; if we could see all our will would fall to zero. Force is released through our patience and we are strong only through weakness. This is the paradox in our nature. There may be minds of such sort that the statement of the paradox brings conversion; but to most men the discovery comes through experiences which are very subtle; philosophy cannot track them.

NOTES ON RELIGION

If one should ask why it is that Christ's influence so reorganizes people, what it is in him that gives life to the Salvation Army, arouses Tolstoi, draws Nietzsche on like a magnet and inspires the millions of people in whom we see Him working, it might be answered that Christ had less will of his own than any other person who ever had. He is all dissolved. He gives free passage to the power of God.

X

THEOLOGY

The old dogmas of the church—as for instance, the doctrines of the Trinity, of the Atonement, etc., are crude and somewhat ugly attempts to state certain mysteries of personal experience in such a manner that they can be used as badges of organization work and as political whips. For this reason we dislike them. After we have once had experience of the truths to which they refer, however, we can no longer regard them as nonsense, or as pure hocus pocus. They are attempts to define things which Christ expressed by his life —i. e., his relation to God, his relation to men, his mediation in every sense of the word.

NOTES ON RELIGION

We should accept these dogmas as we accept a child's drawing of a haystack. We do not doubt the existence of the haystack.

XI

THE LOVE OF GOD

The Love of God is the only thing that there is enough of in the universe. To those in whom all desires have become merged in this love, it is the explanation of all sentiment. It is all things—consolation, ambition, happiness, the love of others, the only thing we can give to our children, our aim and our fulfilment—life itself.

XII

MOODS

Do nothing either to embrace your mood or to oppose it. Say to crossness, Prevail if thou list. Make no effort; for all effort shuts the door against new life. Life comes neither through affirmation nor through negation but through waiting. Let God then execute him-

NOTES ON RELIGION

self in all the world; for all our strength is to do evil. The key to all Jewish thought is this: that you make no endeavor to understand it. If there were to be a single text set on the outside of the Bible it should be, I waited for the Lord.

XIII

HORACE

Horace shows us the Sabine peasant woman, the poorest and humblest of living mortals, standing with palms uplifted to deity. How many of us are so well acquainted with the body's language of piety?

XIV

APPARENT HIATUS

There is an implication in the New Testament that a man can have faith if he wants it. Christ rebukes people for having little faith. I do not understand this and it seems contrary to the rest of his teaching. I do not see how a man can increase his faith any more than he can add a cubit to his stature. To bid him

NOTES ON RELIGION

do so confuses him and stops his wheels. Bid him rather to knock and it shall be opened unto him. One should not, I think, reproach a man for his want of faith; but on the contrary one should tell him that the amount he possesses is exactly right for him and that perhaps it may increase.

xv

EAST OR WEST

The sacred books of the East (I mean the Hebrew writings) have been, as we have seen, poison to the West. And yet a kind of healing poison, too; for the Europe that has been casting off the Papacy during the last four hundred years is very different from the Europe which accepted the Papacy a thousand years before. Perhaps we are drenched enough and the first fit is over. Perhaps we are become so strong in our veins and bowels that we can understand the Bible, even the New Testament without being turned into bigots or devils through contact with the superior wisdom of Asia. The truth seems to be that the Hebraic view as to the nature of life is being kneaded into humanity gradually and in the course of thousands of years.

NOTES ON RELIGION

XVI

THE PORCHES TO THE TEMPLE OF TRUTH

There are three porches to the Temple of Truth, and all of them lead to the same rotunda; the porch of Love, the porch of Intellect, and the porch of Character.

The man of strong feeling understands God. He assents without need of kissing the Book: he knows more than his teachers. The man of Intellect on the other hand has worked out some theory. It may seem rigid and senseless to another, but to him it is a bastion of the infinite. He will die for it. Lastly comes the man of Conscience, the good citizen. This man does not live in the regions of emotion: neither can he give you a reason of much depth. But he knows how to act. Now of these three, he that loves becomes the saint, he that thinks becomes the prophet, and he that acts becomes the hero.

Love feels the currents of force, intellect perceives them, conscience obeys them. All three are servants of force and bow down before it. They are directed and used by it: they are merged and embodied into it. In their fainter forms the identity of those three

NOTES ON RELIGION

modes of life is not perceived; but in the blossoming perfection of each their identity becomes doubly plain. You may call them temperaments if you will—the saint or lover, the prophet (or artist) and the hero.

These three, then, enter by different portals into the Temple where pours the unimaginable Power, which is to them (as it were) stillness and silence. Instead of death, through the shock of this power they receive life; and as the three children in the fiery furnace walked unharmed, being united with the fourth presence that moved within the blast, so these accordant souls become lost in the power behind them, which pours immortally through them into us and into all humanity, taking up all men in itself by reason of the continuity of life. Such a thing is man, that when we have begun to perceive the divinity of his life we have nowhere to leave off; we find that there is no part of him which is not inspired and we must regard him as a form and portion of Deity.

All of us live in the swirl and terrible suction of this great whirlpool. Buddha in his contemplation and Mozart in his music do no more than submit to it. They go round with the stream. And their non-resistance draws us in behind them.

NOTES ON RELIGION

XVII

SACRIFICE AND BURNT OFFERINGS

The practice of Christ's teaching is easy; for while you are waiting to begin you are already under weigh. On the rack, in the school-room; in society, in solitude; in books, in conduct; waking and sleeping you have but to give way to God's power, to give up, to accept, to expect nothing, to be satisfied that the problem is being solved and the truth advanced and behold you become through this very self-surrender a part of the solution itself.

The Lord's Prayer and the Lord's Supper are the whole ritual of Christianity. I cannot find in the New Testament any other instruments of piety, any regimen or scheme of devotion, any priesthood or altar. Each soul is left to adopt its own devotions and practices. As for Christ's own practices we are obliged to guess them. He enjoins prayer, prayer and fasting, watching, he discourages vain repetitions; but leaves all in general terms. No form of service was set up, nothing laid down categorically as a gate to the Kingdom of Heaven. Christ seems to have

NOTES ON RELIGION

regarded every man as a great saint, who needed no aids to devotion. The Kingdom of Heaven was within the man and would open up its own teaching as to such matters. Christ teaches us to regard one moment in life as like the next. His Kingdom of Heaven is always present. There are no porticos and approaches to it.

The steps which people lay with so much expense to temples—always lead up sooner or later to brambles and ruin. But this temple of Christ's which has no visible portals is indestructible. Nothing was ever so abstract as this idea. Time cannot get at it to destroy it. The truths of Christ are like fish that live in the veil of the waterfall and are as active as the stream. They elude the net. And this Kingdom, which does actually exist, is shown and opened to us more effectively by the elliptical sayings of Christ and the accidental anecdotes about him than ever could have been done through any ritual or theology. Thus the practice of Christianity is easy.

Princeton Theological Seminary Speer Library



1 1012 01130 4963

